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HOME MISSION EXERCISE

THE INDIANS

LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
OF THE
Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church,
No. 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

THE INDIANS.

Q. IN reading or studying the history of our own country, to which, happily, so much attention is being given at the present time, whom do we find to be among the most interesting of its varied inhabitants?

A. The North American Indians.

Q. What do we know about them?

A. Not very much from an early date. They are generally spoken of as the "original inhabitants" of America, the first people of whom there is any historical knowledge.

Q. What gave them their name?

A. When Columbus landed on our shores he believed he had touched India, and so called the people he found here Indians.

Q. What do we know about them as they were at that time?

A. It has been estimated that they numbered perhaps half a million, and that they were widely scattered over the continent. They were red skinned and black haired, with high cheek bones and marked features; lived in tents or wigwams, and dressed in the skins of wild animals. They used bows and arrows for weapons, and subsisted chiefly on fish, wild animals, nuts, roots, berries, and Indian corn, or maize, which was cultivated in small fields chiefly by the women.

Characteristics.

Q. What was the general character of the life they lived?

A. They had a rude form of tribal government, with the principal authority vested in the chiefs or head men. There were many of these tribes quite dis-

tinct from each other; they had a diversity of languages, with no books or literature of any kind, and of course no schools. They knew nothing of public improvements, and were without roads, bridges, or any of the many conveniences that we consider indispensable.

Q. Did they have any religious belief?

A. They possessed vague notions of a Great Spirit and of what they called happy "hunting grounds" hereafter; but their forms of worship were very crude and their ideas of religion and morality undefined and loose. They engaged in frequent destructive wars with each other, and many of them were not only barbarians, but savages.

Q. How did they treat the white people who appeared on their shores and came to settle among them?

A. In many cases they were very kind, hospitable and considerate; in others, alas, not only suspicious, but treacherous, cruel and bloodthirsty. Too many pages of our history are black with the ruin and devastation they wrought—often where it was least deserved.

Q. How did the new comers—the white people—treat them?

A. On the whole, rather badly, to our shame be it said. They either took their land away from them by force, or bought it for some insignificant sum far below its real value; they made treaties which they did not hesitate to break when it suited their purpose, gave promises they did not always keep, and frequently waged war upon them without sufficient reason or justification. The pages of history show injustice and cruelty on our side, as well as on theirs, and we were Christians, not barbarians.

Governmental Policy.

Q. What is meant by "The Peace Policy?"

A. In 1870 General Grant, at that time President, announced his intention of dealing with the Indians in a more methodical, consistent manner. He was convinced that we should show ourselves more friendly towards them, and take more active measures for their civilization, the education of their children, and the honest fulfilment of treaty obligations; in short, that we should seek to win them by kindness and carefully considered plans rather than by spasmodic efforts, as had been the case up to that time.

Q. How was the enunciation of this policy received?

A. The country at large was tired of the repeated Indian outbreaks, with their accompanying loss of life and property, and while, perhaps, rather skeptical as to results, was prepared to try anything that might do away with them. Those who had given the subject any special thought and looked at it from the standpoint of the philanthropist and Christian, welcomed the suggestion and promised the heartiest coöperation in the overcoming of the many practical difficulties that attended such an important change.

Q. What has been the result of this policy?

A. No radical change could be made at once, but this policy has gradually prevailed until, at the present time, Indian outbreaks, or so-called "wars," have practically ceased. Expensive military posts established on the frontier, to guard against these uprisings, have been abandoned—in some cases turned into schools for Indian boys and girls. The Indians, as a whole, are slowly but surely abandon-

ing their savage and barbarous customs, and are adopting, though often unwillingly, those that are more enlightened and civilized.

Q. How many Indians are there at the present time?

A. Including the mixed bloods and the white people, who have been adopted or absorbed by them, there are about two hundred and fifty thousand, exclusive of the native inhabitants of Alaska, often incorrectly called Indians.

Q. Where do they live?

A. In almost every State and Territory, the largest numbers being found as follows: In the Indian Territory some 67,000; in Arizona, 38,000; in the two Dakotahs about 27,000; in Oklahoma Territory, 12,000; in New Mexico, 10,000; in Minnesota, 7,500; in New York, 5,000.

Reservations and Agencies.

Q. What is an Indian reservation?

A. This term is applied to land set apart or reserved by government for the exclusive use of Indians.

Q. What is an Indian Agency?

A. On most of these reservations the Government has a representative, called an "Agent," who has the general oversight of all matters pertaining to the Indians. Associated with him there is generally a physician and clerk, together with farmers, policemen and other employees, all of whom are paid by the Government. The entire establishment is called an "Agency," and many of these Agencies are well manned and well conducted.

Q. To whom are these Agents responsible?

A. To the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who is at the head of the Indian Office, which is a bureau in the Department of the Interior. He is appointed

by the President, lives in Washington, and has the general care of the Indians and their interests.

Q. Are the Indians of the different agencies and the different tribes alike?

A. Very far from it; indeed they differ in almost every respect. Some of them are very ignorant, superstitious, degraded, barbarous, living only a little better than the brutes; others are intelligent, industrious, thrifty, living much like white people, and showing themselves eager to improve their condition; and between these two extremes there are all degrees of advancement.

Q. What is the Government doing at the present time to improve their condition?

A. A great deal in many directions. Among other things it is appointing a better class of men to look after them; is gradually breaking up the reservation system; is settling individuals on lands of their own and making citizens of them; is assisting them in the development of their lands and homes, and is giving a large number of them regular employment at the different agencies and schools.

Education.

Q. What is it doing for the education of the young?

A. It maintains among them a system of schools of different grades, for which it makes an annual appropriation of about two and a half millions of dollars, and in which more than 23,000 boys and girls are now being instructed. Some of these schools are very large and well equipped, affording industrial education along many different lines, and numbers of the pupils go out well qualified to earn their own living.

Q. Is the Government doing all that needs to be done?

A. By no means. It cannot do the work of Christian missionaries and Sunday Schools, although many of the teachers in its schools are Christian men and women, eager to do to the utmost of their ability.

Q. How is this want being met?

A. By the different denominations, who raise large sums of money for the establishment of distinctively Christian schools and the support of missionaries who give all their time to religious teaching and work.

Q. Are these missions successful?

A. They are, indeed. There is hardly a more hopeful, encouraging field either at home or abroad. Thousands of Indians are already members of Christian Churches and are living noble christian lives. Some of their preachers are eloquent, able, godly men, and conversions among the young are frequent.

Presbyterian Mission Work.

Q. What are we, as Presbyterians, accomplishing for the education and Christianization of these people?

A. We have several large and prosperous schools on different reservations; an efficient force of missionaries; a number of flourishing churches, partially self-supporting, and many a little struggling interest, which, but for the lack of money, might be a great power.

Q. Which are our largest, most important missions, and how much do we annually expend on them?

A. The Board of Home Missions has its largest Indian work among (1) the Dakota Sioux (23 churches); (2) among the nations of the Indian Territory (about 30 churches, purely Indian); (3) among the New York Indians (6 churches); (4) among the Nez Perces

(5 churches); (5) among the [illegible] Negroes (2 churches), (6) and among [illegible] scattered tribes; applying about $[illegible] this work of direct evangelization, [illegible] mission-school work and Alaska. The [illegible] themselves raise about $3,500 towards the support of their own ministers.

Q. Where are our leading [illegible] how many teachers do we support and how many [illegible] are enrolled?

A. At Tucson, Ariz.; [illegible] Tahlequah and Nuyaka, I. Ter.; and [illegible] Will, S. D. There are 68 teachers and 1,[illegible] pupils.

Q. How much money is appropriated annually for this one object by the Women's Board, to which the educational work among the Indians is assigned?

A. For the last school year, which extends from September 1, 1897, to September 1, 1898, the Women's Board has appropriated for the payment of teachers' salaries, current expenses, repairs and improvements on buildings the sum of $65,835.

Q. Why are we encouraged to continue this work?

A. Because the Indians are human beings and our brethren; children of the same great Father; made in His image. Christ died to save them, as to save us, and there is as much joy in Heaven over the conversion of an Indian as there is over the conversion of a white man, for He is no "respecter of persons." We have encouragement, too, because of results in the past, and every reason for believing that still greater results may lie before us in the future.

MRS. T. J. MORGAN,
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